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A COMMUNITY PLANNING PRIMER

27

ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
The Honourable W. Darcy McKeough, minister
W. H. Palmer, deputy minister
COMMUNITY PLANNING BRANCH

D. F. Taylor, director
February 1972

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three steps to tomorrow

A COMMUNITY PLANNING PRIMER

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introduction



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You hear a great deal about planning nowadays. On radio and television, in newspapers and magazines, references are constantly being made to economic planning, social planning, community planning, national planning—even family planning. Yet while the idea and the practice of planning are as old as mankind, it is a term that is misunderstood and suspected by many people.

We would like to introduce you here to community planning. We think it is important because it deals with a subject of direct relevance to all of us—the quality of the urban and rural communities we live in. We will describe what planning is, why we believe your municipality should plan, what a planning program is and how it is carried out in Ontario.

<https://archive.org/details/31761115475576>

planning: what & why

three steps

Let us first consider just what planning is.

Definitions are hard to come by but, in the broadest sense, planning might be described as the forethought we give to various possible actions before we decide to do something.

When we apply this admittedly rough definition to *community* planning, we are talking about the actions we decide upon today to influence the way we will live and the shape our communities will take far into the future.

Although the planning process is not a simple one, we can think of it as a three-step exercise: the survey, the selection of goals, and the selection of the means of achieving those goals.

- We must first consider what we have in terms of money, time, and human and physical resources.
- In the light of this knowledge, we must examine our goals and select those of greatest appeal and use to us.
- Finally, we must select the best means of achieving those goals.



the survey

selection of goals

means of achieving goals

everyone plans

When we look at planning this way, it becomes obvious that everyone plans.

You may have to choose, for example, between a trip to Europe or a new car. Your first step is to examine your finances and to determine the amount of time you have available for a trip.

You must then decide which you prefer and, once you have done this, you will either make travel arrangements or visit automobile dealers.

If you operate a farm or a business of any sort, you know that you are considering goals and methods all the time. You are, in effect, a planner.

Making decisions of this kind is not too difficult when only one or two people are involved. But decision making becomes much more complicated when the needs of everyone living in a city, town, village or township must be taken into account.

You certainly want your community to be a pleasant, healthful place to live in. But you and your fellow citizens will probably have many different ideas as to what constitutes a pleasant and healthful environment and how various goals should be achieved.

How does your community decide, for example, how many parks are needed or where houses, stores, factories and new roads should be located to serve people best?

Through a community planning program, you, as a member of your community, can help shape answers to such questions.

finding the answers

The same three planning steps apply. First, an inventory of the community must be made to discover its assets and areas for improvement. This requires a study of the community's inter-relationships with other communities in the region and across the country; surveys of population and land-use distribution; social and economic potential; employment opportunities; the condition of buildings; the adequacy of roads, of water and sewage facilities, and of community facilities such as schools, parkland and recreation equipment, programs and buildings.

Decisions must then be made about the kind of community that is both needed and possible. At this stage a great many questions are asked — questions like these:

What are the community's prospects?

- Will the factors that have shaped its past continue to exert an influence or will others take their place?
- What will be the composition of future populations?
- What level of public services will be necessary to support these populations?
- Where should new developments be located?
- What happens to the community's older areas?
- Will we be able to afford to fulfill the goals and objectives that are set?
- What kind of community do we want to be: dormitory suburb, economically balanced industrial-residential community?

The final step in the community planning process is, first, to determine the detailed policies and development standards needed to achieve the community's goals and, second, to select suitable locations for specific uses. With a full knowledge of community resources and problems, and an understanding of the kind of community that is needed, we can decide where and when the different types of land uses should be located and what development standards should be applied.

why bother?

Your municipality has only so much land and, as you are well aware, only so much income. These resources must be wisely used or shortages, high costs and many other inconveniences will result to both individuals and to the community.

We have all seen examples of waste, ugliness and inefficiency. Badly designed street systems and inadequate off-street parking. Air-polluting factories in residential districts. Precious farmland chewed up by scattered development. Depressing, deteriorating neighbourhoods without parks or adequate services. Skyscapes of billboards and overhead wires. Poorly laid-out communities where schools, businesses and recreational facilities are inconveniently located for the majority of citizens who live there.

The cost of correcting these problems can be high but with planning, at least, their effects can often be reduced when a community decides to plan for and invest in its future.



municipalities plan

While you may still think of planning as something new and strange, your municipal council already does a great deal of it—just as you do.

Every year it prepares a budget—which is, in effect, a plan of how public funds are to be spent the following year. Many municipalities now prepare five-year capital-works programs to establish priorities for the projects they are financially able to undertake.

Whether or not your municipality has a planning program, your council must prepare budgets and spend money. The value of such a program is that it provides a better basis for decisions about these expenditures.

If your municipality has a planning program indicating the kind and distribution of growth it wants to encourage over the next ten or fifteen years, the council and the public will have a much better idea of where new roads, sewers, parks and other facilities are to be located, how much will have to be spent on these, and how far in the future they should be budgeted for. The school board will have a better idea of how many new schools will be required and where they should be located.

Since all local bodies will have been involved in the preparation of the plan, there will be a strong likelihood that the cost of providing the necessary public services will be kept to a minimum.



a boon, not a burden

Much opposition to planning arises from the notion that individual freedom is limited when planning enters the picture. More specifically, the concern is that the freedom of landowners is limited because a planning program contains policies for directing development.

This is a misconception. It is true that, in serving and protecting the public interest, community planning must determine when the free exercise of an individual's rights may run counter to the interests of the entire community.

If we consider land as the heritage of all the people, then we must make sure that it is to be used by private citizens to serve the needs and interests of both the individual and the public.

The fact is, of course, that through community planning the individual is offered a wider choice of possible environments than he might otherwise have. As an individual, a person may have little sway over the multitude of private decisions that shape the growth of his community. But as a participant in the planning process, he can have an influence.

- Through his participation, he can help make decisions about the growth of the community that can be translated into action.

By being involved in the selection of goals, he has been given a voice in determining the future of the entire community—not just his own property.

He can make decisions about his home or business with more confidence because he has notice of what the municipality and various boards and commissions have committed themselves to over the foreseeable future.

It is significant, too, that the legislation for planning is purposefully designed to minimize the possibility of planning decisions being made without public understanding.

An important document of local planning, for example, is the official plan. It is a statement of goals for the development of the community. It is also the product of the process of public discussion and of decision-making and is expected to embody the wishes of the community.

A further guarantee of public representation is the planning board itself. Most boards consist of citizens as well as councillors. They are responsible for developing a planning program, preparing an official plan, giving advice and making recommendations about planning matters to the municipal council.

It is also significant that the responsibility for the adoption and implementation of plans is in the hands of the municipal council—the elected representatives of the people.

In adopting an official plan, the council should be giving the approval of the whole community to it. In putting the plan to work, through the use of by-laws, public works and expenditures, the council should be putting the will of the community into effect.

where there's a will . . .

These by-laws and the daily decisions of local councils and boards about sewers, water, roads and parks provide the means of shaping the growth of the community as it is visualised in the official plan.

They are necessary if the wishes of the community are to be realized. We have suggested what problems can arise if planning is not carried out or if planning proposals are not acted upon. But implementation (which we will discuss in greater detail later) is not likely to happen unless the council takes the action needed to make the plan a reality.



the planning program



what do we have?

We have considered in general terms what planning is and what is involved in doing it. Let us now look more closely at those three steps for preparing a community planning program and how each is accomplished.

Each step answers one of these questions: What do we have? What do we want? How do we get what we want?

In each case the "we" referred to are the residents of the community, the council and the planning board members.

The first step in the planning process is the survey. This is a study to determine the human, economic and natural resources and the existing or potential problems of the study area*.

Information is collected about the size and distribution of the area's population, the different kinds of land use, the age and physical condition of buildings, the adequacy of local services and the ability of the community to pay for future development.

Since the survey involves collecting and evaluating much technical information, it is best done by professional planners.

The resulting study provides the planning board and the planners with knowledge of the community today upon which they must base their work and recommendations about the course the community should take tomorrow.

for more information on this step, read **PLANNING SURVEYS**, a publication of the community planning branch

The background consists of large, organic, flowing shapes in two colors: a vibrant orange and a deep blue. The shapes are interlocking and fluid, creating a modern, abstract aesthetic. The text is centered within a blue shape.

what do we want?

Once the survey has been completed and the problems and assets of the community are understood, the next step is to consider community goals.

In effect, it is now time to think about the kind of community that you and your neighbours and your children will want and need. For this reason an opportunity must be made for you to state your views.

There are two types of goals to be considered – general and particular.

general goals

These must answer such questions as:

- What do we mean when we say that we want our community to be a good place to live in?
- Do we want or need to improve the quality of our residential and commercial areas or do we consider them to be good enough now?
- Do we need more parkland? More roads? More schools? More public utilities such as water and sewers?
- Do we want to allow people to construct new buildings wherever they please, or do we want to encourage a pattern of development that will benefit the whole community, both now and in the future?

particular goals

Having decided about the broad objectives, we must now get down to the specifics of what we need.

The basic question here is: What particular patterns of land use and standards of development will most enable us to achieve our general goals?

Suppose, for example, that improving residential standards has been adopted as a general goal and that the planning survey has revealed the existence of a large number of substandard houses.

Council must decide on steps to improve or remove this deterioration and to prevent it from spreading to other houses or residential areas.

The substandard houses may be renovated, replaced with new ones, or both. If it is decided to build new houses, we must consider whether they should be built on the same sites or somewhere else in the municipality.

To prevent further deterioration, suitable standards for building and for property maintenance must be drawn up and enforced, and other measures used such as clean-up and paint-up campaigns.

Suppose, to take another example, that lands along a river are periodically flooded. It must be decided in this case whether or not to allow building on this land, clear of the flood line, or whether it could best be used for other purposes, such as a park or sports field.

If council decides to permit development it must then select, in relation to the pattern of existing land uses, the best uses to allow. As an added precaution, it may also decide to take steps to remove the flooding problem.



time to get involved

Each decision leads to further questions—and the need for further decisions. Finding the best answers is the core of the whole planning process.

The difficulties involved in doing this should not be minimized. There will be many different opinions about what is good for the community and how it can best be achieved.

Here again the public should become deeply involved in this stage of planning. All opinions should be heard. There should be open meetings to explain proposals to the public and to get their reactions about the many matters affecting them.*

Through arrangements such as this, you and your fellow citizens can play an active role in the formulation of planning policies.

You can offer your ideas on various matters as individuals or through local organizations to which you belong.

You can organize neighbourhood associations through which you and your neighbours can present your common views in a constructive way.

You can make your views known through your councillors. Only if they have this knowledge can they make decisions that will be beneficial to everyone concerned.

for more information, read **THE THREE R'S OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**, produced by the community planning branch.





how do we get it?

Planning is not just a matter of deciding what sort of community we would like to have, then sitting back and waiting for it to happen.

There is no point in undertaking a planning program unless it is going to result in a set of policies indicating, in words and illustrations, what course the community intends to follow for its future development.

The documents containing these policies are the focus of the whole planning process.

Initially, they give the citizens of the community specific recommendations to consider.

Once adopted as public policy, they reflect what the citizens want their community to be.

They provide guidelines and incentives for investors and, most important, a framework for political action.

A full planning program will likely contain several inter-related documents. The most important is the official plan, which is described in some detail later.

This is usually a broad statement of primary development policy that should, in most cases, be reinforced by other, more detailed, statements of policy.

Some of these policy statements will be based on further studies—urban renewal studies, detailed transportation studies, social and housing studies, for example—that go into greater depth than those normally undertaken to prepare an overall official plan.

Community or neighbourhood plans are another important feature of the official plan. They translate the general recommendations of the overall plan into more particular proposals for one part of the planning area or one stage of the planning program—preferably just prior to the time of development.

the official plan

In Ontario, the major planning document, the official plan, is a statement of goals and policy for the development and redevelopment of a planning area. Its general intent is to help provide a pleasant, efficient and economical living environment for the residents of the community or communities it covers.

To do this, the plan sets out a clear statement of both general and particular community goals and the policies by which these goals are to be achieved. The official plan document consists of texts and maps. It must be adopted by the municipal council and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Because it is such an important document, we will examine the elements of this plan in more detail:

An official plan is a statement of policy for the future growth and development of a community.

When a council adopts an official plan it is saying, in effect, *this is the kind of municipality we want*. In other words, the council is stating its intention to encourage the type of growth recommended in the plan.

The official plan deals with a wide range of policies relating to such matters as land use, transportation, urban renewal, recreation, urban design and economics. These are of prime importance if the community is to function properly.

Many modern industries, for example, go to great lengths to be good neighbours. But, unfortunately, there have been cases where industries located in residential areas have made neighbourhood living almost intolerable because of noise, fumes, smoke and increased traffic associated with the plants.

When the centre of a town loses its appeal to shoppers due to poor access, traffic congestion and inadequate parking, businessmen will

decide they have to locate on the town fringes to stay competitive and the centre starts to run down.

Problems can arise in rural areas too. Once enough houses are built along a rural highway, the amount of traffic that road must carry can change it from a highway to a local street. This makes its more frequent improvement necessary—often at great expense to the municipality.

If scattered subdivision of land takes place, farms may be broken up and consequently more difficult to operate efficiently. To compound this, land “values” rise making it costly to operate farms or to increase their size to make them more efficient.

A planning area does not have to be confined to the boundaries of any one municipality.

As we will point out in more detail later, it can include a single municipality, part of a municipality or any number or parts of adjacent municipalities.

The intention of the official plan is to help ensure the health, safety, convenience and welfare of the residents of the planning area.

This includes whatever a community considers necessary as long as it bears some relation to its ability to pay and to the manner in which expansion takes place, land is used, and services provided.

If the policies recommended in the official plan are to be easily understood, the plan must be clearly presented.

This is why both maps and a text are needed. The text should state the aims of the plan, recommended standards of development, and a program for carrying the plan out—including the sequence and timing of new development.

The plan should also provide for such matters as the general land-use categories and their relationship to one another, density policies,

community and neighbourhood forms, recreation requirements and transportation.

The supporting maps should indicate where the different categories of land use and the major community services—such as schools, libraries, arenas, water and sewer systems and roads—should be located.

The plan must be adopted by council and approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The planning board only has authority to make recommendations to council, which will then adopt the plan if it finds it acceptable. But it is not properly an “official” plan until approved by the minister.

As a formally adopted statement of development policy, the official plan has come to be regarded as fundamental legislation—a kind of constitution for the community.

Once approved, it becomes binding on public authorities. No public works may be carried out by municipal councils, school boards, public utility commissions or other local authorities that do not conform to it. No council in the planning area may pass a by-law that conflicts with it.

While the official plan guides the actions of public authorities, it is also an important reference whenever individuals or private organizations make investments in the community—a new business, a new house, a new school, a new road or watermain.

Each of these is an important part of an individual's immediate environment and each is influenced by the official plan. That is why every community needs an official plan, why every citizen should be concerned about the policies the plan sets out for his community, and why he should support them or suggest ways in which they might be improved.

amending the plan

No plan, of course, can be expected to forecast precisely the nature of changes that will take place in a growing, living community. Official plans have to be reviewed constantly to make sure that the policies and projections they set out are relevant. This sometimes calls for an amendment.

Amendments are normally initiated by the planning board although council can apply directly to the minister, regardless of the board's position. You yourself can also initiate steps for an amendment by applying to council which can then recommend the proposal to the minister for his approval. If council refuses to recommend the proposal, the minister can be asked to refer the matter to the Ontario Municipal Board.

how do we make it work?

It is not worth going to all the trouble of deciding on goals and preparing plans if they are only going to be forgotten or put away. The ideas on paper must be transformed into houses, parks, roads, hospitals, civic centres and all the other facilities necessary for the life of a community.

Planning is not implementation. It is the process of deciding what the community wants and how it is going to get it. It can reach its culmination in the official plan and in the plans that grow out of it or are part of it, such as urban renewal or neighbourhood plans, a civic centre concept, a transportation scheme.

Implementation is the process of achieving what we have decided is best for all in the community. It is the co-ordination of private development with public facilities and it involves the close cooperation of both these sectors in developing and allocating our physical and social resources.

Private actions are those in which you are involved as tenant, owner, developer or businessman. They are the activities through which the physical fabric of the community is created—the houses, stores, factories, churches, arenas and other buildings where the life of the community is carried on.

There are two kinds of public action:

The first is the provision and coordination of the publicly-owned ingredients—the streets, pipelines, public works and buildings needed to support community living. It also means allocating such facilities as schools, day-care centres and health services to where they are most needed.

The second is the legislative framework within which private development is to take place.

When we refer to a legislative framework we mean, of course, the municipal by-laws that are enacted to guide development—the zoning, building, and property-maintenance by-laws.

It is important to note that the application of these by-laws is not planning. Their value for planning arises from the fact that they make it possible for a council to carry out, or implement, an official plan and thus to direct growth within the municipality.

zoning by-laws

At first glance, a zoning by-law looks somewhat like a detailed official plan in that they both contain maps and texts about land use. But, although they are complementary, the purpose of these two documents is quite different and it is important that they not be confused with one another.

Here are some point-by-point comparisons:

The official plan gives you a comprehensive picture of how land in your community should be developed in the future.

The zoning by-law is the legal instrument for translating the general policies of the official plan into those that deal specifically with the manner in which land is to be used — its best use, the type of buildings best suited for that use, how close buildings should be to each other and to the street, for example.

The official plan normally anticipates the form and shape the community might take over a relatively long period of time. It will state major municipal goals, indicate the location of various land uses and will anticipate the major services that will have to be provided to take care of the expected population or work force.

The zoning by-law takes the next step—preferably prior to development. It is more detailed than the official plan and is concerned with a shorter period of time. It deals, as we have said, with the kinds of buildings permitted, their height, the size of the lots, and anything else council considers to be desirable for the community.

The official plan might indicate in broad terms what areas should be set aside for industry, for institutions, for shops and offices, as well as the major services these areas will likely require to support future populations.

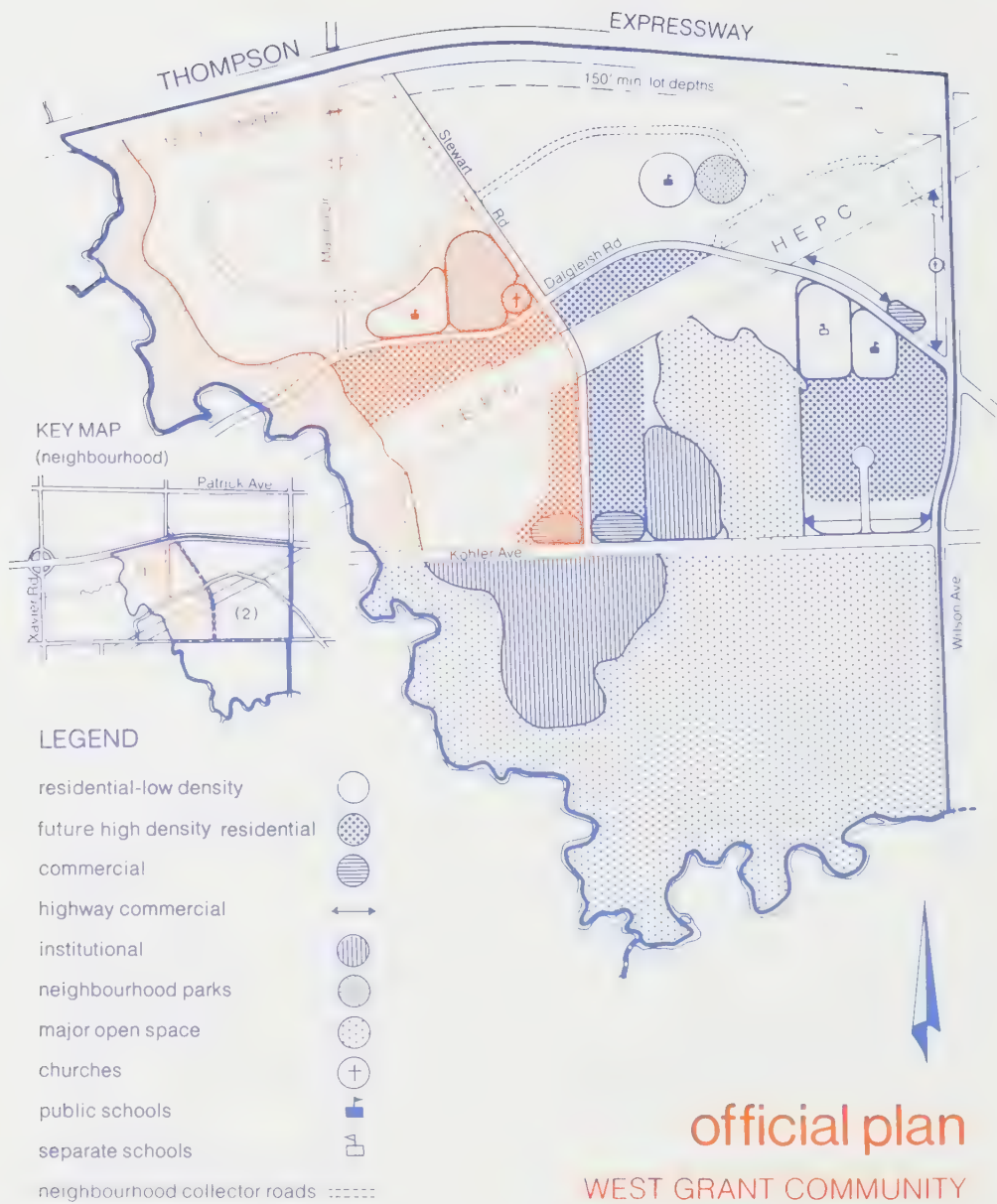
The zoning by-law will put the plan to work for each of these areas when the time is right. Industrial zones, for example, will be divided into types of industrial processes allowed with a range from dirty and noisy to clean, quiet and unobtrusive.

Finally, the official plan is prepared for a planning area which need not be just one municipality.

The zoning by-law is prepared and passed by the council of a single municipality and, once approved, enables the council to guide development into specific patterns that are in line with the general policies of the official plan.

Changes to a zoning by-law can be accomplished in two ways.

If the change is a major one involving substantial parts of a municipality and a large number of people, it is passed by council and submitted to the Ontario Municipal Board for approval. But small changes that do not affect the spirit of the by-law and deal with individual pieces of property are approved by a body appointed by council known as a committee of adjustment. More about this committee later.



official plan

WEST GRANT COMMUNITY



zoning by-law
(neighbourhood 1)

subdivision control

Subdivision control now covers all land in Ontario. This gives your council—preferably with planning board assistance—and the Minister of Municipal Affairs the opportunity to make sure that all proposed plans for subdividing land come under public scrutiny and are in the public interest.

They will want to know, for example, if the subdivision is necessary and if it is properly located. They will want to be sure that it is well designed in terms of such matters as street layout, lot sizes, grades, drainage and utilities. The municipality will particularly want to know if it can assume the responsibility for the additional development before the subdivision can be laid out, sold and developed.

If this were not done, enormous problems would be created. Among them:

- Water pipes, sewers and roads might have to be run through vacant land to reach scattered subdivisions, thus increasing their length and the cost of services to the public.
- Subdivisions laid out on hilly ground could have street patterns that ignore the slopes. This also increases costs, makes them difficult to maintain and more hazardous in cold weather.
- Others, laid out on poorly drained soil and provided with septic tanks and well water, become health hazards when the septic tanks pollute the wells or when the septic tank beds are subject to flooding.

A council is wise to avoid these problems and the use of registered plans of subdivision (in conjunction, of course, with the official plan) gives it the opportunity to do so. All such plans require the approval

of the minister who consults with the municipality and with provincial and federal authorities.

As with zoning, there are minor subdivision matters that do not warrant preparing full-scale plans of subdivision. Here again the committee of adjustment has an important part to play.

Take the case of a farmer who owns 200 acres of land. Let us say he wants to sell all of the property except for one acre which he would like to keep for himself to live on. Getting that single acre involves the subdivision of land but, as it is a relatively small subdivision, it could be dealt with by a local committee of adjustment or land division committee.

These committees are discussed in more detail in the next section.

“deeming”

Design and service standards change and there are likely old registered plans of subdivision in existence that do not meet the standards of today. In such cases—and if the plan has been registered for eight years or more—your council may deem the plan not to be a registered plan. This means, generally, that a new plan of subdivision would have to be registered before any subdivision can take place.





building by-laws

Another way of enforcing an official plan could be by making sure that buildings meet minimum standards of construction. This is important if the plan includes a balanced program for urban renewal and community improvement for the poor conditions of building is one of the chief causes of blight.

maintenance-and-occupancy by-laws

The fact that a building meets minimum structural and material standards does not guarantee that it will continue to do so over time. A person has much less incentive to maintain his home in good repair and in a safe and sanitary condition when necessary standards for the maintenance and occupancy of dwellings are not enforced and nearby properties become neglected.

This, of course, applies to health and fire-prevention by-laws too. Such by-laws not only protect property values. They ensure that future slums do not develop through lack of adequate standards of construction and habitation.



planning organization

In reading this booklet you will have noted many references to the vital importance of planning areas and planning boards in municipal government. But how, you may wonder, do they relate to the more or less familiar organization of cities, towns, villages and townships?

To give you a better idea of planning organization, we will describe these special areas and boards in greater detail. We will deal with their status, how they are established and what they do.

planning areas

A planning area is the territory defined by the minister within which a planning board operates. Depending on circumstances, it may consist of one municipality or of all or part of two or more municipalities. Its boundaries often follow municipal boundaries but need not do so.

The procedure for setting up a planning area combines local initiative and provincial guidance and approval. It normally begins when a council or group of councils asks the minister to define an area for them.

This is a significant step and the minister will want to be assured that the particular planning area is suitable and that the member municipalities are able and willing to commit themselves to a planning program. He will then indicate what the boundaries are to be and will give the planning area a name. These and other details are worked out in full consultation with the municipality or municipalities concerned.

The selection of territory is extremely important. This process is based on many interrelated factors such as settlement location; social and economic trends; the costs of providing water and sewage facilities; the need for roads, for parks and hospitals and other community facilities.

It is also necessary to consider the rate and direction of urban growth in developing areas as well as the concentration of development and social facilities where growth may be light or dispersed.

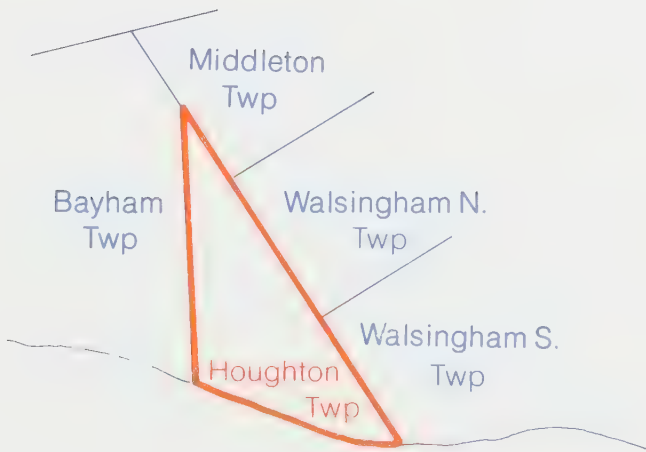
Since these and other factors affect a wider area than a single municipality, it is usually advisable that a larger territory be included in a single planning area.

There are three kinds of planning areas: single independent, joint and subsidiary. The type suitable for each locality depends largely on the community or group of communities.

single independent

A single independent planning area is one encompassing a single municipality. Such an area may be suitable in municipalities having little potential for urban or recreational development or where special circumstances dictate that planning should be on a short-term basis.

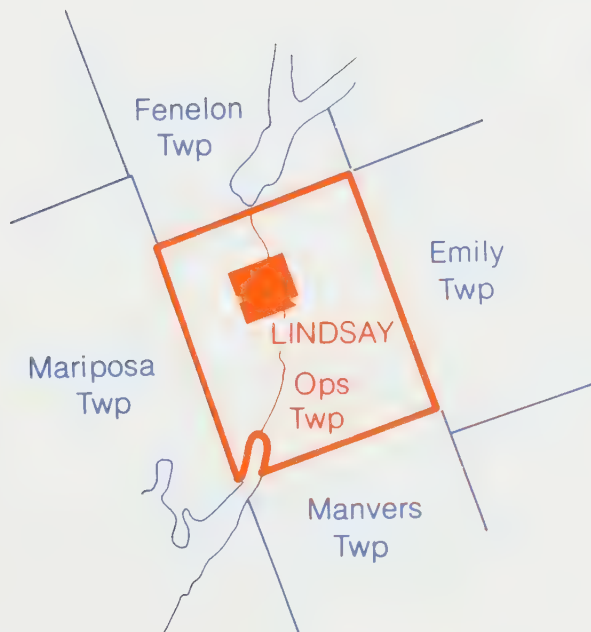
Throughout much of the province, however, the large amount of urban development and its widespread distribution have made it most advisable that planning be undertaken for areas larger than a single municipality. The joint planning area attempts to meet this need where the municipal structure has not yet been re-organized to provide a better basis for planning and for other aspects of managing the locality's affairs.



joint

A joint planning area, as we have said, may consist of all or part of two or more municipalities, one of which is "designated" by the minister. The council of the designated municipality appoints members to the joint board (with the concurrence of the other municipalities) and these must be approved by the minister.

Joint planning areas can cover any number of municipalities having common interests and problems. They can include entire counties or even groups of counties.



subsidiary

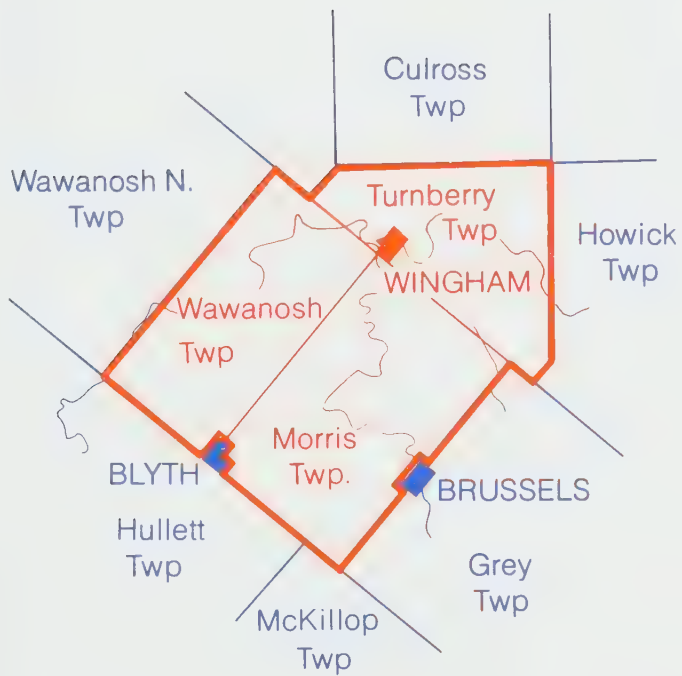
While joint planning boards carry out general planning for municipalities within their areas, individual municipalities—and especially large urban municipalities—often want to do more detailed planning for themselves.

Under these circumstances, and if the minister concurs, a subsidiary planning area may be established within a joint area. This encompasses a single municipality and operates in the same manner as a single independent planning area.

Since the subsidiary board operates in an area already under joint jurisdiction, the two boards have to agree on their respective roles and spheres of operation so that their efforts will be integrated in area-wide programs. This should be decided by the councils before the planning area is defined.

The joint board might concern itself with the overall problems and prospects of the planning area such as generalized land use, location of major roads, the preservation of open space, joint water and sewer services and pollution control.

The subsidiary board, meanwhile, could concern itself with equally important (but strictly local) development matters such as the location of streets and schools, the provision of community services, and with detailed standards of development such as zoning and building by-laws and plans of subdivision.



planning boards

Once a planning area has been defined, the municipality must then appoint people to the planning board, which is responsible for preparing the proposals on which the community will base its future development. In doing this for council, there are three tasks the board must perform:

- It must authorize the undertaking of surveys and projections of land use, population, education and cultural facilities, transportation, municipal finance and all other factors in the planning area.
- With this information, and with the personal knowledge the board members have of the area, the board selects community goals, prepares a draft official plan expressing those goals and the manner by which it is possible to achieve them, and recommends the plan to councils in the planning area.
- Finally, it must make recommendations to each council in the planning area about the implementation of the official plan. (How these duties are carried out has been described in Section 2.)



a role for everyone

The machinery for planning in Ontario is carefully designed to involve not only the planning board and council but the citizens themselves in the planning process.

The board is responsible for preparing a plan and then recommending it to council for adoption before it goes to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for approval.

Councillors can be members of the planning board and are able to make council's views known while the plan is being prepared. They also make progress reports to council to maintain a necessary liaison.

The board can make recommendations about the implementation of the plan. It can be consulted on such matters as the location and development of open space facilities, shopping centres, new roads and other municipal services. But the public aspects of implementation — public works and by-laws — are the responsibility of council.

The public is able to participate through public meetings held by the planning board and through the information it publishes. Sometimes planning boards invite members of the public to serve on committees.

membership

Planning boards generally consist of four, six or eight members plus the head of the municipality or designated municipality. The only stipulation is that employees of the municipality or employees of a local board (with the exception of teachers) cannot be members.

Planning board membership normally includes both councillors and non-councillors. The former serve one year. The latter serve three years with staggered terms to offset retirements and assure continuity of experience. This, of course, is not an inflexible system and the minister has sometimes found it best to permit different arrangements.

finances

When it comes to spending, the financial arrangements leave no doubt that the council retains full responsibility for planning. The planning board receives its funds from the municipality or municipalities in its planning area. Each year it submits its budget to council, as do the civic departments. Council approves or makes alterations it considers necessary.

technical staff

An effective planning program not only needs money. It needs professionally and technically qualified staff to carry out sophisticated studies, make accurate projections and develop sound proposals. The board is responsible for hiring and utilizing staff, subject, of course, to the approval of its budget by council.

A board can hire permanent staff and most municipalities—especially those experiencing growth pressures—have come to realize the importance of having full-time professional help in formulating and implementing their policies for development.

But even if conditions, financial or otherwise, rule out hiring permanent staff, a planning board can use the services of planning consultants. There are many such firms in the province.

In either case, the planners, working under the authority of the board, undertake planning studies, hold public meetings, consult with other local bodies and with provincial agencies, prepare plans and make their recommendations to the board. In all of this, they work as servants of the board and cannot dictate policy.

committees

committees of adjustment

In the last section we gave illustrations of property owners who wanted minor exemptions from zoning by-laws or who wanted to transact a simple subdivision without having to prepare a registered plan.

If your municipality has a zoning by-law (and, preferably, an official plan), council can set up a committee of adjustment for these purposes. The committee may grant minor variances from the provisions of a zoning by-law and may give its consent to certain land transactions such as the creation of single new lots, the sale of parts of lots, mortgages and long-term leases.

Committees of adjustment operate within rules of procedure prescribed by the minister and must have not less than three members. Anyone, except a municipal councillor, a municipal employee or employee of a local board, is eligible for membership. School teachers, incidentally, are not considered municipal employees and are therefore eligible.

Two or more municipalities can, in effect, share a committee because there are no residence restrictions for members. The term of office is for three years—staggered so that, as nearly as possible, one-third of the members retires each year.

land division committees

These are similar to committees of adjustment with two important distinctions. They do not deal with zoning by-law variances and they were established to rule on applications for consent to individual land severances for the larger units of local government—county, regional, district and metropolitan.



summing up

What we have been talking about in this booklet are land and people relationships: how, under planning legislation, we can set out and carry out long-range policies for using land that will best serve the citizens of our communities.

This concern over the quality of our urban and rural environments is one of the central issues of our times. The supply of available land is limited and mistakes can be hard to live with and costly to correct. Thus, the decisions we make today about the consumption and preservation

of the land around us have the most profound implications for the way people will live twenty, thirty, a hundred years from now.

So many of the amenities we want in community living — enjoyable downtowns, pleasant journeys to school and work, open space and recreation close at hand, the comfort and privacy of a home in a neighbourhood that suits our needs, the simple enjoyment of clear water and fresh air — are not as easily obtainable as we might think. But no one will disagree that they are worth the price in terms of planning and perseverance.

Why perseverance? Because planning by itself is not enough. It must be supported by good municipal organization, sound administrative practices and forthright public policies.

Those of us who, as responsible citizens, help our local councils and planning boards to preserve those amenities where they exist and make them possible where they are needed perform an important service, not only for ourselves, but for those who follow. Future generations may not praise the good work that has been passed on but they will deplore the errors that are perpetuated.

Summing up, community planning requires a greater emphasis on foresight than on hindsight, on discipline than on indulgence in what we do with our first great natural resource.

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